

CHRIST ASLEEP IN THE VESSEL

NO. 1121

A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Master, care You not that we perish?”
Mark 4:38.

THE day had been a very illustrious one. Our Lord had remarkably displayed His teaching and healing powers. Great crowds had been attracted, and He had both delivered to them most precious parables and worked among them most marvelous cures. Grand as the day was, it could not come to a close without a storm. After the same manner you will find it in the history of the church of God that intermingled with great successes will be great afflictions. Pentecost is followed by persecution, Peter's sermon by Peter's imprisonment. Though today a church may flourish abundantly, in a very short time it may be visited with stern adversities. It may be tried none the less, but all the more, because God is in its midst, and is blessing it. When our Lord took ship, the weather appears to have been very fair, and many little boats which scarcely would have tempted the sea had its surface been ruffled, put out upon the lake under the convoy of the great Teacher's vessel. His was the admiral's flag ship, and they were the happy fleet. They made a gay flotilla sailing softly like sea birds when the ocean is in a gentle mood. All hearts were happy, all spirits were serene, and the sleep of the Master was but a type of the general peace. Nature reposed. The lake was as a molten looking-glass, everything was quiet. And yet all of a sudden, as is the custom with these deep-lying inland seas, the storm-fiend rushed from his haunt among the mountains, sweeping everything before it. The little vessel was hard put to it, she was well-near filled with water, and ready to sink through the force of the driving hurricane. Thus may our loveliest calms be succeeded by overwhelming storms! A Christian is seldom long at ease. Our life, like April weather, is made up of sunshine and showers—

*“We should suspect some danger near
When we perceive too much delight.”*

Nothing beneath the moon can be depended upon, all things are invariably variable. “Boast not yourself of tomorrow,” says the wise man. And he might have added, “Boast not yourself of today, for you know not how the evening may close, however brightly the morning may have opened.” Let us learn this lesson at the outset. Let us not reckon upon the continuance of present ease, nor fix our happiness upon the fickle weather of this world, but let us be ready for changes, so that come when they may, we shall not be afraid of evil tidings, our heart being fixed, trusting in the Lord.

It would seem that when the storm began, the disciples did not at first awaken the Master. They had some consideration for His extreme weariness, for He had spent the whole day in very severe toil, and His human strength was exhausted. They thought, perhaps, that the hurry-burly of the storm would wake Him. How could He sleep amid the howling winds and roaring waves? They little knew how deeply calm His heart was, so that amid the tempest He could sleep right well, for the tempest came not near His soul. When at last they found that they were in great jeopardy, for their boat would surely sink, they began to judge their Lord, and to think of Him unbelievably and unkindly. They thought they would perish, and they wondered how He could allow them to do so. Therefore they went to Him crying, as Luke says, “Master, Master, we perish.” Or as Mark gives it, “Master, care You not that we perish?” Many of them cried out. One said one thing and one another, but their general spirit was one of complaint to their Lord. They knew He loved them, and yet half-thought Him cruel. They trusted Him, and yet had grievous doubts. They called Him Master, and yet they were in a sort of semi-rebellion against

Him. They acknowledged His sway, but were ready to mutiny against Him because He did not exercise His power for their rescue.

We shall take the text as the keynote of our subject. And first we shall think upon *the apparent indifference of the Lord to His people*. But we shall note, secondly, that *it is only apparent*. Thirdly, *that He has a real care for them at times when He seems indifferent*. And, fourthly, *they shall see this to be the case by-and-by*.

I. First, then, we, as well as the disciples on the Galilean lake, sometimes complain of THE INDIFFERENCE OF THE LORD TO US. It is but an apparent indifference.

Sometimes the complaint takes this shape. God allows natural laws to proceed in their prescribed course, even when His children will be crushed by them. There is a vessel out at sea. It is enveloped in dense fog. Prayers are offered up by godly men on board for the right guidance of the vessel, but if it continues to be steered as it now is, it will come upon a rock, and on a rock it does come, notwithstanding the prayers. Does not God care that a vessel should perish with people on board it who pray for direction and deliverance? At another time the rough winds are out, and the vessel flies before them. She will soon sink. She cannot long live in the storm. Many supplications and entreaties are sent up to God, yet the tempest does not abate one jot of its fury. The laws of nature at such times appear to be as grim and heartless as if they were managed by the prince of the power of the air. As God has ordained, so does nature move. For us the floods do not stand upright as a heap, neither do the waters refuse to drown. Whether it is martyr or murderer, the fire devours with equal fury, and the sword falls with an equally deadly blow. "One event happens to the righteous and to the wicked." From this fact arises many a complaint, and we cry, "Care You not that we perish?" Our dear one, whom Jesus loves, is sick. Day and night we plead for his recovery, but the fever takes its course, or the broken limb requires its full time to heal. God does not alter the physical laws of the body for the convenience of His chosen. To them poison is poison, and disease is disease. Full often the Lord permits those whom we love, to suffer long, and He does not seem to pay attention to our prayers and entreaties, no, rather the case grows worse and worse. We are very apt, when we are under a trying dispensation, to judge the laws of nature to be very pitiless ordinances without hearts of mercy, and we say, "Master, care You not that we perish?" It is well to remember, however, what we may all too easily forget, that the present complaint is based upon an error. For the laws of nature do nothing whatever, and are no more to be blamed than the commandments on the church wall. There is no such power as a law of nature acting by itself. All power lies in God, and a law of nature is neither more nor less than a description of the way in which the Lord usually works. The vessel, badly steered, strikes upon the rock because usually God causes ships to obey their helms, and rocks to retain their hardness, and the man who dies of sickness does not die because of some ungovernable force in nature, but because God continues to give energy to destructive agencies. The laws of nature are but a powerless letter. God works all things. What has He, Himself, said—"I create the light and I create darkness." Not a seed swells beneath the soil, not a bud bursts into beauty, not an ear of corn ripens for the harvest, without God. He is in the dew and the sunshine, the light and the warmth, which nourishes and perfects the plant. Happy is he who in all things beholds a present Deity. I see laws of nature, and I know that God acts according to them, but I see best the God who is behind the law. Law, what force has that? It is God working by the law, He does it all. This truth sets matters in another light, for if the Lord brings the trial upon us we open not our mouth, but yield to His will. His ways of action must be right, and if they cause us grief, we nevertheless feel that He is not afflicting us willingly, or grieving us without design. When we perceive His hand, we kiss the rod. Instead of saying, "Master, care You not that we perish?" we cry out in resignation, "It is the Lord, let Him do what seems good to Him."

Sometimes our lament assumes another shape. We view the troubles which come upon us as the result of the stern decrees of fate, and shudder because it seems to our unbelief that God has made small account of us, and arranged affairs with slight reference to the weakness, sorrow and infirmity of His people. Brethren, the most of us now present believe in predestination, and are persuaded that the Lord works everything according to the counsel of His will. We believe that all things, great and small, are fixed in the eternal purpose, and will surely be as they are ordained. This doctrine becomes the lurking

place of a temptation. We gaze upon the ponderous wheels of predestination in their awful revolutions, and fear that they will grind us to powder. In the forebodings of our trouble, we fear that we may be entangled in the terrible machinery, and that as it will not pause for our crying, it will tear us to pieces. Like the prophet, only with far greater dread, we cry—"O wheel!" But we ought to reflect that there is no such thing as blind fate—predestination is a far different thing. Fate is a blind man who rushes madly on because he must. Predestination is full of eyes, and proceeds in one line, because it is the best path which could be taken. Fate is a tyrant declaring that such a thing shall be because he wills it. Predestination is a father ordering all things for the good of his household. God has His purpose, and His way, and His purposes are both for His own glory, and for the good of His people. Who among us would wish the Lord to turn aside from His holy and gracious designs? He has ordained the best, would we have Him vary? He has determined all things wisely, would we have Him determine otherwise? That which happens to us occurs because in the judgment of infinite wisdom and goodness, it is on the whole best that it should be so. Would we wish the Lord to arrange otherwise? Will you tempt the Holy One of Israel? Will you ask Him to do other than that which is wise and just, and good and holy, and for His own glory? Instead of crying out against destiny, let us cheerfully accept it because the Lord is in it. Do not say—"Care You not that we perish?" but believe that instead of perishing, your complete salvation will be promoted by all the events of providence.

It may be that we are in a different state of heart, and are worrying ourselves today because it seems to us that affliction is sent upon men altogether irrespective of their character, and the godly are made to suffer even more than the wicked. If you read the apostles' question with an emphasis, "Care You not that *we* perish?" it will show you my meaning. They did as much as say, "We are Your apostles, we love You, we spend our lives for You, care You not that *we* perish? We understand that the vessel which carries a load of publicans and sinners should go to the bottom, but care You not that *we* perish?" Sometimes, under trouble, we have wondered why we are so afflicted, for we have felt that the Lord has kept us from known sin, and led us in the way of holiness. And therefore we have seen no special cause for His scourging. Our cry has been, "Show me why You contend with me." And if any have been cruel enough, like Job's comforters, to say that we were suffering because of special sin, we have held fast our integrity, and declared that we were not wicked in the sense in which they accused us. Now let us look one minute at this, and we shall discover that God does send affliction according to character, after all, but not after the rule which flesh and blood would prescribe. It is not written, "As many as I hate, I chasten," far from it. He permits the wicked to spring as the grass, and allows them to flourish like a green bay tree. As oxen they are well fed, that they may be prepared for the slaughter. They are pampered, but their end is near. But, it is written, "*As many as I love*, I rebuke and chasten." The favorites of heaven are inheritors of the rod. It is not said, "The branches which bring forth no fruit shall be pruned." No, they shall be utterly taken away in due season, and cast into the fire. But it is written, "Every branch *that bears fruit*, He purges it, that it may bring forth more fruit." And, therefore, when affliction comes upon our beloved relative who has lived a most exemplary life, or when a painful death happens to an unusually gracious man, we must not judge the Lord unkindly, as though He were unjust, but see His loving hand in it all, and bless Him that He deals with our beloved ones as He is known to deal with sons, for what son is there whom the Father chastens not? He scourges every son whom He receives. The gold is put into the furnace because it is gold. It would have been of no use to put mere stones and rubbish there. The corn is threshed because it is corn. Had it been weeds it would have been untouched by the flail. The great Owner of heaven's jewels thinks it worth His while to use a more elaborate and sharp cutting machine upon the most valuable stones. A diamond of the first water is sure to undergo more cutting than an inferior one, because the King desires that it may have many facets which may throughout eternity, with greater splendor, reflect the light of the glory of His name.

Perhaps, dear brethren, we have thought that Jesus did not care for us because He has not worked a miracle for our deliverance, and has not interposed in any remarkable way to help us. You are at this time in such sore distress that you would gladly cry, "O that He would part the heavens, and descend for my deliverance!" But He has not opened the heavens. You have read in biographies of holy men the details of very extraordinary providences, but no extraordinary providence has come to your rescue. You

are getting gradually poorer and poorer, or you are becoming more and more afflicted in body, and you had hoped that God would have taken some extraordinary method with you, but He has done nothing of the sort. My dear brothers and sisters, do you know that sometimes God works a greater wonder when He sustains His people in trouble than He would if He brought them out of it? For Him to let the bush burn on and yet not to be consumed is a grander thing than for Him to quench the flame and so save the bush. God is being glorified in your troubles, and if you realize this you will be ready to say, “Lord, heap on the loads if it is for Your glory. Give me but strength equal to my day, and then pile on the burdens. I shall not be crushed beneath them, but I shall be made to illustrate Your power. My weakness shall glorify Your might.”

Possibly, the hard suspicion that Jesus does not care for you takes another form. “I do not ask the Lord to work a miracle, but I do ask Him to cheer my heart. I need Him to apply the promises to my soul. I need His Spirit to visit me, as I know He does some good people, so that my pain may be forgotten in the delight of the Lord’s presence. I need to feel such a full assurance of the Savior’s presence that the present trial shall, as it were, be swallowed up in a far more exceeding weight of joy. But, alas, the Lord hides His face from me, and this makes my trial all the heavier.” Beloved, can you not believe in a silent God? Do you always need tokens from God? Must you be petted like a spoiled child? Is your God of such a character that you must mistrust Him if His face is veiled? Can you trust Him no further than you can see Him? Besides, you are losing what you have while pining for what you have not. You say, “I need promises,” and I ask you—

*“What more can He say to you than He has said,
You who unto Jesus for refuge have fled?”*

You say you need a token for good—what greater tokens do you require than He has already given you in your past experience, or that He has presented to you in the flowing wounds of a dying Savior? The tokens for good which Jesus gave on the cross ought to be enough, and to spare.

Still, says one, “If He does not come to me and break the darkness with some light from His presence, I wish He would lessen the pain I bear. If He will not take it away altogether, yet surely He will not let me utterly perish through its severity.” Ah, “perish,” that is the point, and I pray you observe the distinction, “That He may try us we can understand, but that He should let us perish, we cannot comprehend.” No, my dear brothers and sisters, you are not asked to understand it, for you have not perished yet. Bad as your case is, it might be worse. You are brought very low, but you might be lower, you might be in the dungeons of hell. What a mercy it is that you never can sink lower than the grave, you shall never make your bed in hell. Thank God for that. When you come to the lowest, God interposes. The tide turns when you reach the full point of ebb, and the darkest part of the night is that which precludes the rising of the sun. Be of good courage, you have not perished yet, and let this be a wonder to you—

*“Lord, and yet I am alive,
Not in torment, not in hell!”*

Why should a living man complain? Should he not still have hope, and expect that in his extremity God will appear for him?

Thus we have mentioned various forms in which the temptation to charge the Lord foolishly presents itself to the soul.

II. But now, secondly, THE INDIFFERENCE OF GOD TO HIS PEOPLE AT ANY TIME MUST BE APPARENT, IT CANNOT BE REAL. Meditate a little. Consider the character of the Triune God of whom we are speaking. The Father—can He be unkind? “His mercy endures forever.” His name, His essence, is love. It is said of Him that He “delights in mercy,” and we know that He is an unchangeable God, and therefore we are not consumed. Can you, O heir of heaven, believe that He is indifferent to you, His child? You being evil, are careful for your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven pity His own? Can you stand by and see your child tortured with pain, and not wish to relieve him? Have you not sometimes felt, O mothers, that you would take your children’s pangs upon yourselves right joyfully if you could set your dear ones free? And have you, poor fallen creatures, such

hearts of compassion, and has your heavenly Father none? O, judge Him not so. Say not to Him, “Care You not that we perish?”

Think of the Second Person of the blessed Trinity in Unity, Jesus, the Son of God, your Brother as well as God’s dear Son—can He forget His people? Has He not taken upon Himself your nature? Was He not tempted in all points like as you are? Has He not engraved your name upon the palms of His hands, and written the dear memorials of His Love on His side nearest to His heart? Can you look into the face of the Crucified, and believe that He is indifferent to you? O, there was a time in the love of your espousals when His left hand was under your head, and His right hand did embrace you, when you would not have thought so harshly of Him. When He has kissed you with the kisses of His mouth, and you have known His Love to be better than wine, you could not have said such a barbarous thing concerning your Well-Beloved. No, it cannot be that Jesus should ever be indifferent to His people’s woes.

And the Spirit, the dear and ever-blessed Holy Spirit, who dwells in us, can He be without pity? He condescends to dwell in us, and to take upon Himself the peculiar office of the Comforter, and this is matchless condescension. Do you think that He is the Comforter, and yet does not sympathize? A Comforter without sympathy would be a strange being indeed. He would be a mocker of human woes. But He is full of tender pity. Think of the love of the Spirit and never for a moment suspect that He is careless as to whether you shall perish or not. The Triune God is love. “Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him.” He cannot be indifferent to the condition of His own.

Consider next, beloved, the ancient deeds of divine love, of which the Scriptures speak expressly, and you will see that the Lord cannot be careless as to your welfare. Know you not that the eternal Jehovah loved you before the earth was? Have you forgotten that the mountains, with their hoary heads, are but newborn babes compared with His love to you? He chose you. He might have passed you by, but He chose you to be His own. “The Lord has appeared of old unto me,” says the prophet, “saying, Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you.” And has He loved you these myriads of ages to now be indifferent to your groans? Can it be? If He had meant to cast you away, He would have done so long ago. If He needed reasons for rejecting you, He had reasons from all eternity, for He knew what you would be. No sin in you has been a surprise to Him. He foresaw the hardness of your heart, and the waywardness of your disposition, and if He could now reject, He would never have chosen you, He would never have taken you to Himself at all. O, then, let eternal love forbid you to dream that He can ever be careless as to whether you perish or not.

Next, I pray you think of what He has done for you. I will only put it in brief. Do you think that Christ came from heaven to earth to save you, and is now indifferent about you? Do you think that He lived here 30 years of toil and weariness for your redemption, and will now cast you away? And do you believe that He went up to the cross for you, having endured Gethsemane’s terrible garden and its bloody sweat for you, and yet has no concern about you? Do you think He bore all the wrath of God on your behalf, and now thinks your salvation such a trifling thing that He cares not whether you perish or not? Do you believe that He slept in the grave for you, and rose again for you, and is gone within the veil for you, and pleads before God for you, and is, after all, a hypocrite, and has no real love to you? Man, if what Christ has done does not convince you, what can? Many waters could not quench His love; neither could the floods drown it. Will you not confide in Him for the present and the future, after what He has done for you?

Consider, yet again, what He has worked upon you personally, and what you have known and felt within yourself. Years ago you were His enemy, and He saved you and made you His friend. Do you remember when, in the agony of your soul, you did cry to Him as from the lowest pit, and He came to your rescue? Will He leave you now? Remember how our poet makes a plea out of his past history, and urges it with God? Do you the same—

*“Once a sinner near despair
Sought your mercy seat by prayer;
Mercy heard and set him free—
Lord, that mercy came to me!
Many days have passed since then,*

*Many changes I have seen;
Yet have been upheld till now—
Who could hold me up but Thee?
You have helped in every need,
This emboldens me to plead,
After so much goodness past
Will you let me sink at last?"*

There is the point. If God had not done so much for us already, we might question His intentions concerning us, but after the goodness and the mercy He has manifested, surely He will go through with it and perfect the work which He has begun. He has spent too much upon His work to relinquish it now.

Recollect, too, beloved—and this is sweet refreshment to the spirit—remember the relationship which exists between you and your God. Fatherhood and sonship are full of comfort. Can the Lord be an untender Father? Will the Lord cast away His own children? “Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, they may forget, yet will I not forget you.” Remember, also, that between you and Christ, O believer, there is the relationship of husband and of spouse. “I am married unto you, says the Lord.” And the prophet tells us that the Lord, the God of Israel, says, “He hates putting away.” “Where is the bill of your mother’s divorcement?” says He, as if He defied any to prove that He had ever put away His beloved. “I will betroth you unto Me forever,” is the language of our immutable God. The Lord has not cast away His people whom He did foreknow. Why, then, mistrust Him? Oh, by the fond relationship which exists between our hearts and God, let us not suspect Him of indifference.

Remember, also, the divine promises. Will He be a liar and let us perish? Remember His oath! It is base profanity to think that He can ever forego His oath! Remember the solemn seal of the blood of reconciliation, how can the Lord treat the blood of Jesus with indifference, or renounce the covenant which was made sure and ratified by the death of His own Son? Let a believer perish! Be indifferent to whether His redeemed is saved or not! Impossible! It cannot be. Far from it! Horrible thought! Let the storm rage as it may, and let Christ sleep as He may, He must feel for His people, His indifference is but imaginary.

III. Thirdly and briefly, THERE IS IN OUR LORD A REAL CARE FOR HIS PEOPLE IN THE MIDST OF HIS APPARENT INDIFFERENCE. It was certainly so on the Galilean Sea. Observe in the narrative that though Christ was asleep, He was in the ship; He had not left His disciples. And however God may seem to deal with His people, He is still with them. “Fear you not,” He says, “for I am with you.” If there is nothing more, the presence of the Lord ought to be enough to cheer us. Our heavenly Father knows our need. To be banished from the presence of God would be hell. But however tossed with tempest our vessel may be, we cannot despair as long as the Lord is our companion.

Remember, again, that although Christ was asleep, He was tossed about as much as the disciples were, and in the same peril. They might well say, “Care You not that *we* perish?” putting Him with themselves, for they would have gone down together, both He and they. If we are persecuted, Jesus is persecuted. If we suffer, the head suffers in the members. Our cause is His cause. This should encourage us. When Caesar said to the frightened captain, “Fear not, you carry Caesar and all his fortunes,” he did afford us an earthly type of the great heavenly truth that the vessel of salvation carries Christ and His honor in it, as well as His people.

Remember too, that our Lord was benefiting His people when He was asleep, for He was setting them a good example, an example of sacred restfulness in times of trouble. He slept not merely because of His fatigue as a man, but because He felt safe in His Father’s hands. When the Master put His foot on board that vessel, He knew there would be a storm. The tossing did not take Him by surprise, and yet He went to sleep because He knew that all was right. No one could have slept with such foreknowledge but one whose heart was full of confidence in God. The Lord would have His people restful and not fretful, “So He gives His beloved sleep.” We have never read of our Lord’s sleeping except on this occasion, this majestic occasion, when He was asleep in a storm-tossed boat, with His head on a pillow, because His heart was on the bosom of God. He did as well as say to all His servants, “Rest in troublous times,

and leave all in the hands of Him who cares for you.” His sleeping was an acted sermon upon, “Let not your hearts be troubled.”

Moreover, He was testing them and revealing themselves to themselves. Perhaps many of them were in the same state as Peter, and thought they could bear anything, but they would never mistrust the Lord. He let the storm blow till they got into a doubting frame of mind, that they might see the evil heart of unbelief which still lurked within them. By this trial He was strengthening them. They were to be fishers of men all their lives, and fishermen must encounter storms. This was one of the storms of their apprenticeship, when their captain was with them, so that when they came to be captains themselves, no strange thing might happen to them if a tempest overtook them. If they had enjoyed all fair weather when Christ was with them, hurricanes would have startled them afterwards when He was gone, but now they will say, one to the other in the time of persecution and trial, “Did He not aforetime show us this, on that very day when He took us to Gennesaret? He was in the vessel with us, and yet we were in a storm.”

Best of all, Christ was caring for them, because He was making their danger an opportunity for the display of Himself. He wanted to show them His omnipotence, but how could He do so if there were no difficulties for His divine power to encounter? He had shown them how He could baffle devils, and overcome disease. But now He desires them to see how winds and waves are subservient to His will, and so He lets loose the raging tempests. For a man to beard a chained lion is little, but let the monster loose and then only a hero will encounter him. The hurricane is loosed, the waves are raging, they devour the boat. Now shall you see how great the Master is as He stands at the prow, and cries, “Peace, be still,” and all is hushed beneath Him. Without the storm they could not have seen the glory of the peacemaker, and so the trial was absolutely necessary that they might learn His Deity to the full.

IV. We come now to our last thought, which is this: IN DUE TIME ALL THOSE WHO TRUST SHALL SEE THAT GOD DOES CARE ABOUT THEM. When Jesus was awakened, He was not angry. He might have walked away from His disciples if He had pleased. It was quite in His power to traverse the billows, and to have left them in disgust. And after the hard things we have said and thought of God, He might leave us to perish if He would, but He will do no such thing. Jesus did not reject the unworthy prayers of His feeble followers. He might have taken offense, and have said, “Is that what you think of Me? Is this the way in which you speak of Me?” But not thus did He upbraid them. He did check them gently, out of very love to them, but there was no anger. He accepted their prayers, and He awoke, and what an awaking it was! How mighty were His works! There was no trace of storm another moment after He had been awakened. The most blustering of the conflicting winds slept like a babe in its mother’s bosom. The waves were as marble. Troubled one, you will enjoy calm, yet. Poor tried and tempted child of God, you will see days in which you will wonder where your troubles are. You will say to yourself, “They are quite gone; I have nothing left to be troubled with. Christ has chased my griefs away.” Perhaps you will enjoy a long, unbroken calm—not an ordinary one, but such a calm, so deep, so profound, that you will say to yourself, “It is worthwhile to have gone through a storm to enter upon a peace like this.” After traversing the wilderness, you will enter Canaan. The angels will visit you when the devils have ended their temptation. You will leave the battlefield for the land of Beulah where you shall hear the choirs of heaven sing, and the angels will bring you spices from the gardens of the blessed. Only have courage! Stand to your post, trust in your Lord, think well of Him, and rest in Him, for as the Lord lives, no vessel that has Christ on board shall suffer shipwreck. He who has faith is insured against destruction. Wait on the Lord, even if the vision tarries, and fair sunlight and smooth sailing shall be your reward.

I shall leave the subject when I have hinted at its application in two ways.

The first is this. I think this is very applicable to the state of the church at this present time. There is great trouble in some minds about the church, for everything is going badly, all things are in commotion. The signs of the times are dark. To me the worst trouble is that Jesus seems to be asleep. There is nothing doing, no great revival of religion, and but little power with the ministry. I am, however, comforted by the reflection that Jesus sleeps, but He never oversleeps. When we fall asleep, we do not know how to awake, but Jesus Christ does—He sleeps, but He does not oversleep. Glory be to His name, He sleeps,

but He is not dead. And as long as He is alive, our joy is alive. While there is a living Christ there will always be a living church. There may be both a sleeping Christ, and a sleeping church, but neither Christ nor His church can perish. If our Lord is asleep, He is asleep near the helm—He has only to put His hand out and steer the vessel at once. He is asleep, but He only sleeps until we cry more loudly to Him. When we get into such trouble that we cannot help ourselves, and feel our entire dependence on Him, then He will reveal His power. Perhaps during the next 20 years, the state of religion in England will grow worse, and worse, and worse. Very possibly for another 10 years, infidelity will abound, and superstition will abound, and then His church will be in a desperate state, and she will cry, “O God, the candle is all but quenched. The light is nearly withdrawn!” And then there will go up such an exceedingly great and bitter cry that Christ will hear it, and come and revive His work right gloriously. It may be He will let the battle go against us for many a day and our slender strength will be broken into utter weakness, and we shall almost despair of the fight. Then will He send His trumpeter to us. Then will His Spirit come, and the loud and clear voice shall be heard, “Be of good courage. When you are weak then are you strong!” Then, on a sudden, in our utter impotence, we shall rush upon the foe once more, and like Gideon’s barley cake, which smote the tents of Midian, and made them lie along, so shall the Lord’s people do great exploits, because the Lord has awaked as a mighty man out of His sleep. A sudden and glorious victory shall make heaven and earth ring with His praise. Be neither discouraged nor discomfited. The storm is not at its worst yet. The vessel is not filled with the waves yet. The water is not up to her bulwarks yet, she still floats. When she can scarcely keep from sinking, and is almost going down by the head, then the captain will stand in the front of the vessel and calm the seas. When the roaring waves nearly overwhelm her, He will say to them, “Peace, be still!” The calm, the long millennial calm, it may be, is close ahead—we know not how near it may be, but let us hope on.

The other application is to the sinner. It may be that there is someone here who is in a desperate plight. He feels his sins, like hungry waves, ready to devour him, and he does not know how to escape. But he has been praying, and I am glad of it. Dear friend, never give up praying! The poor soul has been crying, “Lord help me!” It is the right prayer. Brother, keep on at it. But it seems to him that Jesus is asleep, and he says, “Does He not care for a poor sinner? Will He let me go down to hell, and think nothing of it?” What do you say, friend? Would you let a praying sinner go to hell if you could save him? “Oh, no!” you say, “If he cried to me I would help him.” Do you think you are kinder than Christ? I tell you that—

*“His heart is made of tenderness,
His heart melts with His love!”*

Believe in His love. Cast yourself upon His grace. And when you believe in Him, you are saved. Do not think hard thoughts of Him. Touch the hem of His garment, and you shall be made whole! Trust your guilty soul with Him, and it is well with you now and forever. May God give you His blessing, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—MARK 4.

Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

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